IDAS AND MARPESSA

HOWARD V. SUTHERLAND

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An Idyll of Constancy

BY

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A little while and we shall be as these
Whose sighs disturb'd June's starry silences.

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AN echo this of an immortal tale
Of woman's love, with all its constancy.
Idas, the friend of Jason, found at last
In fair Marpessa peace, as most men find,
Or soon or late, serene companionship
In one whose lips hint more than may be told.
For woman's love, since erst the world began,
Is oft unuttered; but like yonder blue
That swathes the rugged tops of solemn hills,
Proclaims itself by silence, by a glance
That lies like benediction on the soul.
The melody unheard, the airy song
Suggested by the silence, and the peace
Behind the moveless azure—these suggest
The love that bides behind a woman's lips.
For even when those lips proclaim their love,
And when her eyes shine promise, of her soul
Her love is silent fragrance, as its scent
The soul is of the love-desiring rose.
In olden days the tellers of these tales,
Who wove their fancies from the glinting webs
The gods blew earthward, or of memories

Robb'd the hush'd Past, have told how Idas won
The daughter of Evènus, racing him
With hot-soled feet; and how he conquer'd him;
And how the hoary runner plunged to death
Within the waters that assumed his name
And hid his body. But the victor claim'd
Her hand as prize and led her, happy-eyed,
From harsh Ætolia where her grace was lost
To his bright valleys in Messenia.
And she, Marpessa, in her husband found
Her girlhood's dream, and was most satisfied
To worship and be worship'd. In the dawn
She rose betimes to see him seek the woods
Before the deer were stirring; long ere noon,
Her household duties over, for her lord
She watch'd without the bronzen latticed gates
To lead him to their palace; and when came
The softly-breathing Night with eyes of dream,
She raised her lips to him so brave and clean,
Who faced the stars as he had faced the sea.
Now, thinking back, it seems that in their woods
My lonely spirit saw them; hand in hand,
Serene in silence, or with burning lips
Vowing their hearts' indifference to time,
Their love and their eternal constancy.
Youth's roses had departed from her cheeks;
His locks were not so brown as when the waves
Flung their pure mist upon them; yet the gods

Still number'd them with lovely things, with all
That laugh'd and look'd not backward, nor surmised
The night behind the promise of the day.
And deeming each the other beautiful
They both were young; for Age no finger lays
On her who 's loved; and he whose lips receive
A heart's impassion'd murmurs, fears no more
The whisper'd warning from the lips of Death.
And even now she bade him weave for her
In such embroidery as color'd words
Can hang upon the silence, all the tale
Of Jason and his heroes; how the sea
Curl'd angrily around them, while the wind
Shrill'd through its teeth its heritage of hate;
He told her of the heroes; and at last
Of dark Medea, who had charm'd his lord,
Or so the heroes said, and married him.
And then he told her how the land was full
Of awful mutterings of unseen mouths
That said her hands were bloody. Thus he told
The day's new gossip much as we to-day
May gossip in the twilight. Now, as then,
The idlest tale, if one but whisper it,
Finds ears to give it welcome; now, as then,
The wind is bearer of the distant deed
And Truth is ever that which is untold.

And when she spoke it was of other things
That dearer seem'd to him than tales of war.
For she a woman was, and dream'd again
Of that first night when o'er her blessèd hand
He bent and said he loved and worship'd her.
That eve they linger'd by a marble fane
Whose stilly whiteness fill'd their hearts with peace,
And watch'd the dusk spread purple coverlets
Upon the mountains' summits. On the woods
Lay darker mantles, and the vales were black
With sleep that woo'd the cattle and the flowers.
They spoke no word, but watch'd with wonderment
The many changes, knowing they were one
With hills and trees and all that graced the vales.
Then, in her father's garden, he and she
That summer's night had wander'd. Far away
The heavy hills now slumber'd; in the skies
The stars were gather'd, moving solemnly
Their order'd ways, expectant of the moon.
And now was heard the twitter of a bird,
And then a cricket's protest, else so still
The air about them that he caught the wind's
Soft whisper in her tresses; and the while
She look'd away, his love o'erpower'd him
And he had touch'd those tresses with his lips.

But she was dreaming then of—Ah! who knows?
Perhaps of him. Perhaps unknown to him
She sensed his adoration, as the flower
May sense at noon the pity of the dusk.
Perhaps, although she never felt that kiss,
Night's stilly voices whisper'd: "Thou art loved!";
Perhaps the stars proclaim'd it, or the wind,
The hopeless wind, whose love is long lament.
Perhaps she thought of whispers and of sighs,
Of cool-cheek'd roses brought on golden morns
With silv'ry words of greeting. Ah! who knows?
And wand'ring home beneath the risen moon
She lean'd to him a little, and his arm
Had almost dared to hold her prisoner.
But when at last they reach'd the shadow'd porch,
By scented creepers shelter'd from the world,
Again love master'd him and, ere she knew,
His lips had seal'd his secret on her hands.
And though his eyes were hidden now from her,
And though his voice was silent, she was 'ware
That this no passion was, no youthful heat
To pass ere morning with the icy moon
And all her chaste attendants. This was love,
That grows in silence, love that worship is;
Whose constant flame burns constantly above

Life's grey illusion, and essays to light
The hopeless highways through the realms of
    Death.
And then with face uplifted, that his eyes
Might seek her own eyes' solace, he had told
His love for her, and how, as in a net
The tangled bird may flutter, now his heart
Was caught for ever by that guileless charm
With which the gods had graced her. He was
    one
Who lived for action; and his speech was bare
As winter's dreamless branches; but a sheen
Encircled him that evening, and his words
Seem'd golden like the heart-song of a bird
That sings its joyous message in the sun.
And he had won her, though the moon was gone
Before, all lily-like, she droop'd to him
And kiss'd his forehead, saying she was his;
And kiss'd again, as if she knew that now
The gods would eye them through unkindly lids
And wreck the flimsy fabric of their dream.
For they that sit in judgment love us not
Who dwell in Time, imprison'd, till we seek
The silence and the shadow. From their seats
They watch our vain endeavor, hear our sighs,
And note the eager groping of our hands
To hands that tremble uswards; through the
    dusk

Our whispers rise and vanish, and they hear,
And hollow laughter thins the lips of them.
For human loves are holy; our desire
Outflames their awful splendor; and although
They scorn us, who are hostages of Death,
They envy us, and hate us for our dreams.

And so the while they linger'd in the woods,
And Idas bade her whisper, to her love
Marpessa told that story. And it seem'd
Each time he heard it, it was ever new,
Or, like a jewel held against the sun,
Took unknown beauties to it. Through the trees
Serenity beheld them, marvelling,
As Nature ever marvels at the fair,
At so much happiness in two so fond,
In two so pure and perfect. To the trees
They seem'd akin, and to the wind-swept hills
Array'd in joyous colors; to the birds,
Singing from hearts so cramm'd with happiness
They never can outpour it, they were things
Half unsubstantial, with the tiny blooms
That smiled their stilly message of delight.
And when her voice was silent, and the tale
Was ended, he would question: "Even now
I know not how I won thee, I, whose arms

Have fear'd to clasp thy beauty." And she smiled
And bade him wonder. "While I live," she said,
"My love must needs be silent. When I die
I'll whisper thee its secret, and thy heart
Shall strain against the barriers of death
To bring me solace." And he bent to her,
And said: "I love thee, and would e'er abide
Within the folded pinions of thy soul,
At peace and happy. If thou venturest
Where ghosts await us ere I go with thee,
Thy love shall draw me thither; should I go,
I'll wait thy boat's still beaching, and assuage
Thy murmurs with the welcome of mine eyes."
"My love thou art," she whisper'd. "I am thine.
Our day is at its morning; music fills
Our happy hearts as now the air is fill'd
With yon gay bird's impassion'd melody.
The noon shall follow with its sense of peace,
Then blessèd evening with its memories
And all the sweet companionship of stars.
I gaze untroubled down the aisle of Time,
Because thy love shall guard me." Then he kiss'd
The hand that touch'd all-tenderly his hair.
"I only know I love thee," he replied.

"Thy words are music; let my silence be
The air that would contain them. Hark! a bird
Has pity on my dumbness, and to thee
Would sing the benediction in my heart."
And then they listen'd, and the woods became
Their temple, and the bird its feather'd priest
Whose wholesome adoration pleased the gods.
Then Idas press'd his dear one close to him.
"It loves," he said. "It loves, and therefore sings.
But though I love, my worship must be mute,
My fond Marpessa, my beloved wife."
And then, perhaps, she raised to his her lips
And saw, with closèd eyes, the olden dream
In all its purity. Oh! never say
That love is aught but holy. From the dark
We journey to the darkness; love, the while,
Enswathes us in its utter spotlessness
And makes of poor, imperfect instruments
Things worth the What's-to-follow. Love is all.

For two swift years the gods look'd carelessly
On Idas and Marpessa. There were wars
'Twixt god and god, intrigues and jealousies
To hold their bright attention; otherwheres
Kings robed in purple, wearing crowns of gold,
Look'd at the stars perhaps too haughtily,

Or plann'd To-morrow's conquest; them the gods
Smote silently and swiftly, laughing long
To see the pomp that follow'd them to death,
As if they thought their banners or their plumes
Might alter Death's enorme solemnity,
Or hint: These once were kings. For two swift years
Those lovers, now long silent, dream'd their dreams.
They laugh'd together in the morning's cool
And raised their babes. And then the gods look'd down
And saw their fondness, and an arch'd surprise
Above their heavy eyes bode ill to them.

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AS when great birds, white-plumaged, in the foam
Of untrack'd seas from drowsiness awake,
And make the bright air brighter with the flash
Of light-tipp'd wings, so now the shining heavens
Wherein the gods gleam'd idly, seem'd awake
As, one by splendid one, they roused themselves.

Then moved among them a delightful boy,
The star-eyed Ganymedes, loved of Zeus,
Whose rounded limbs the winds kiss'd joyously
The while he slumber'd; in his hand he bore
A crystal goblet topp'd with fragrant foam,
And touch'd each snowy shoulder. And the gods
Were glad to see his pretty artlessness
So drank and laugh'd, and, laughing, drank again.
And then on golden platters, finely wrought,
Most rich in pictures of heroic deeds
And loves now sung by singers and the stars,
The curl-brow'd boy to each reclining god
Took honey-sweet ambrosia, and they ate,
And thus renew'd their youth. And being fill'd
They look'd again to where the fair earth gleam'd
As gleams a crystal river when the sun
Pours its hot love upon it. Saying naught
They gazed thereon in silence, much as we
May watch the thing from which still Beauty's breath
Has blown the grossness, idly wondering
Why Zeus had made a toy so beautiful.
Swiftly they saw with their all-seeing eyes
The mountains' majesty, the charm of vales,
The drowsy forest's beauty; from the woods

Their gaze turn'd slowly to the silv'ry streams
That wound through gay and flower-enamell'd meads
And laugh'd while Death allur'd them to the sea.
They saw the city with its hordes of men
As blind and selfish as their sons to-day;
Amassing wealth beyond the needs of them,
Disputing vainly in their ignorance
Of things as far beyond them as the stars.
They laugh'd to see the soldier's martial stride,
The condescension of the sated lord,
Who smiled on worth and frown'd on poverty
While Death stood silently beside his seat
And eyed him with grave patience. In their hearts
They mock'd man's pride, and wish'd him bitterness.
They saw the hardy peasant at his task
Behind his straining oxen; on the hills
The piping boy with brown'd and sturdy limbs
Beside his sheep; and where the rocking sea
Responded to the wooing of the sun,
And gleam'd its pleasure, bearded fishermen
Whose eyes roved landward where their loved ones were.
They saw the priests perform the sacrifice
On ancient altars hewn from gleaming stone,

While white-robed vestals watch'd the sacred
flames
And sang the solemn pæans; in the fields
They saw the women bent above the grapes.
The tranquil kine amused them, for they thought
Of restless Io's heavy punishment;
And when a deer would raise its antler'd head,
Or the meek rabbit signal its affright
With lifted ears alert to every sound,
Their bright eyes widen'd as they hoped to see
A shepherd's wooing of a willing nymph.
And loud they laugh'd to hear what vows he
made
Of lasting faith, or swore to cherish her
Despite her fault; for well the wise gods knew
The bees are fond while flowers are yet to
win.
But soon forget the flower that is despoil'd.

Apart from all the rest, Apollo sat,
But eyed the earth as idly. In his hair
Such glory linger'd that his face was bright
As is the sun itself, and yet his eyes
Were blacker than the gloom of wintry skies
Ere stars adventure from their hiding place.
One hand lay heavy on his marbled knee
As, forward bent, his gaze pierced fearlessly
The gulfs of blue; the other held the lyre

With which at times he charm'd his grave compeers
By dream-evoking music, strains as sad
As Day's bright scorn or Night's sweet constancy.
But now, though Zeus oft eyed him lovingly
As if in supplication, at his side
The lyre was mute; for where the trees enclosed
A moveless pool on that revolving sphere
Where dreams are born that Fate may mock at them,
He saw—Marpessa. And the joy in him
Became extinguish'd like a blown out light
Because, all-suddenly, he longed for her,
Who seemed a thing of whitest ivory
Within an em'rald casket; like a flame
His joy leap'd up and suddenly went out
And left his huge heart empty, as to-day
Our little joy as suddenly is gone
As is the fragrance of the fated rose.
But heedless of the ever-burning gaze
That flamed above her movements, in the pool
Marpessa bathed, her black hair having bound
About her brows all-tightly. By the reeds
Her garments lay, and though they snowy were
Yet she was whiter, for her purity
Herself was, as its pallor is the moon,
And though a wife yet was she innocent.

The pretty deer, with large and lustrous eyes
And hesitating hoofs, came from the trees
And nosed the glinting water, eyeing her
As though she were a thing of woods and hills,
A thing that knew and loved them; and anon,
When they had sensed the loveliness of her
And sipp'd their fill, they turn'd their heads from her
And shyly sought the forest's shade again.
The birds, attired in brilliant liveries,
Consider'd her a sister, look'd at her,
And sang while looking; then, with wetted wings,
Flew to their mates and woke the scented peace
With twitter'd gossip, till these others sought
The little pool that held the wonder-one.
Then, as he gazed, their swiftly-moving wings
Seem'd brighter to Apollo than the skies
When sunset tints them; and he envied them
Their fondness for Marpessa. From his seat
He tower'd suddenly, as does the flame
The winds have tortured; and had sought her then,
While yet his heart's Titanic hammering
Paled his bright face. But Zeus, the Father, call'd,
And set him to a task that hinder'd him.

And once again, that same task being done,
He peer'd from out the shelter of a cloud
And saw Marpessa. It was even now,
And they that mock the destinies of men
Sat solemnly together, knee by knee,
Beneath grave Zeus and his all-jealous spouse.
And while they whisper'd of the day to come
The sad-eyed Dusk, with dreams in either hand,
Stepp'd from their midst and sought the weary earth.
Before the gentle sorrow of her face
The light withdrew, to men whom Sleep still bless'd
Bearing the day's illusion, and the hope
For that which, being granted, proves but vain.
And while he gazed upon the half-hush'd woods,
Where now the trees in blessèd stilliness
Exhaled their souls, all-grateful for the day,
From out their gardens to the greater peace
Marpessa came, and Idas. Lover-like,
His arm was still about her; and again
He charm'd her with the story of their love
In days that now seem'd days of golden dream.
And though so oft the story he had told,
Yet seem'd it ever new. In wonderment
She walk'd beside him, raising trustingly
Her eyes to his when he a deed recall'd
That brought the Past back, and its memories.

Above their heads, where arched the heavy
boughs,
The birds cheep'd faintly, knowing that the
night
Was drawing nigh, and soon the hateful owl
Would hoot its feud against all feather'd things
And furry creatures, while the heartless moon
Cross'd regally the heavens. Amid the leaves
In blest security they hid their heads
Beneath their wings, and then the woods were
still
As if with expectation. And the while
The darkness thicken'd, by a well-known path
The lovers sought a bower beloved of them,
And whisper'd there, as if the birds might hear,
About their love that still so wondrous seem'd.
Forgetting naught they lived their dream
again—
Their first sweet stammer'd vows; her first shy
kiss
When, so it seem'd, the gods had turn'd aside
In envy of a girl's pure tenderness;
The silence that was music; and the calm
That slowly flamed to passion—Ah! if thou
Whose lids now droop above this halting line
Hast loved as they loved, but thy mem'ry paint
That perfect picture for thee. Having loved
Thou knowest all things perfect; one thou art

With Idas or Marpessa. Kingdoms change,
Stars wane and mountains vanish; love alone
Remains To-day what Yesterday it was,
And makes us kin to all that 's turn'd to dust.

And while the Night enswathed the sleeping earth,
Asserting its dominion over men
Whose hearts were joyous, men whose hearts were sad,
Where dream'd the gods, the ever-deathless ones,
It darken'd too. Each splendid star now faced
Its sister orb in silv'ry sympathy
And left the high air widow'd; but there glow'd,
Where sat the gods, a steely after light
In luminous suggestion, such as woos
The crystal fringes of the rolling sphere
Where white-furr'd bear tread heavily the snow.
The winds stroked rhymeless music from their harps,
Intoning solemnly their airy chant
In praise of Zeus. "Supremest! Thunderer!
Whose glance is as the lightning; thou whose breath
Titanic cedars bends submissively,
Heaps sea on sea, extinguishes the stars!
Gather'd from far we kneel and worship thee
In wild, unfetter'd music. We have seen

Man's pitiful endeavors, deeds and dreams
Beneath thy notice. Death makes mock of them,
Whose little life is spent ere thou and thine
Are conscious of their being. Thee we praise,
Who art alone enduring; by whose will
We wake from nothing, by whose will we die."
But Zeus, with sad impenetrable eyes,
Gazed into space, well-knowing that at last
Creator and created are as one—
Are doom'd as is the sunset's holy glow,
Are vain as are the hopes of yesterday.
And then the gods that sat at Zeus's feet
With half-hush'd voices answer'd: "Thou art he
Whose eyes have dream'd all things of consequence.
Before it came, thou knewest of To-day
And Destiny's decrees. We bend to thee
Who art the Father." And again the winds
Intoned their praise: "Thou only can'st outstare
The eyes of Time. Death lays no hands on thee;
But crams his grey and echoless abode
With all that thou createst. Thou art he
To whom they wildly clamor ere they tread
The way that leads to silence and despair."
Then once again the gods' deep murmurs voiced

Their answ'ring adoration; but the eyes
Of Zeus were fix'd and moody. So the rock,
Unmindful of the passion of the sea,
Awaits its end; it scorns the sun's caress,
The wind's advances and the lightning's hate.

And now the heights were silent. Cloud on cloud,
With fleecy shoulders leaning each to each,
Took for the night their stations, while the winds
Remain'd without and roam'd, disconsolate,
The starry highways. One by splendid one
The gods lay down to wait Aurora's call
To see the dawnburst, note with ecstasy
The modest flower's unfolding, and delight
In that first note with which the happy bird
Heralds the day and all its promises.
Austerely silent, at the feet of Zeus
They fell asleep, or gazed through half-closed eyes
Upon the face that tower'd over them.
And once again, like huge and brooding birds,
The watchers of the tragedies of men
Lay couch'd amid the cloud-mass stillily;
Prepared to dream of flights against the sun,
Enormous circlings to the pleasant earth
Or swift descents through endless gulfs of space.
But one was wakeful, one who lay apart

And strove to pierce with melancholy gaze
The moveless clouds—Apollo. At his side
His lyre still idle lay. No breathless tones
Lured fancies to the eyes of them that slept,
Or woke the others' musings. By himself
He lay and suffer'd, anxious for the dawn
That he might see Marpessa, and, ere night,
Win her from Idas and the things she loved.

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THE morning dawn'd, a morn of joyousness,
Of blue, bright skies; a morn of wonderment
So breathless that the ever-trilling lark
Outsung itself while mounting, flight by flight,
To where all space seem'd thirsty for its song.
A first, faint breeze, forerunner of the winds
That soon would follow, from the caves of pearl
Where homed the plaintive echoes of the deep
Came slowly forth, and fill'd the airy aisles
With sea-sweet fragrance. As the trees awoke
They trembled slightly, and the whisp'ring leaves
Greeted each other in the speech that is
More delicate than music. Moveless then,

Like virgins at the hour of sacrifice,
They stood and waited till with ruder hands
The winds should touch them, sway them to and fro
In wildest dance, and leave them suddenly
To mourn their stripp'd and tatter'd draperies.
And while a silence still possess'd the air
Save for the dwindling cadence of the lark,
To where the steps led downward Idas came
From out the palace with his shaggy hounds.
Marpessa follow'd with his trusted spear
And bow and arrows; but her dragging feet
And smileless lips betoken'd she was sad
This golden morning; and had kept him there
To hear the first sweet prattle of their babes
Had he not seem'd so eager for the chase.
But when she laid his weapons at his feet,
And raised to his the question of her eyes,
He placed his arm about her, and his touch
Made her forget, who was so solely his.
"Nay, fear not, wife," he said. "Ere noon is come
The hounds shall bay before the welcome gates,
And call thee forth to greet me. Thou shalt see
My shoulders hid beneath the hugest skin
That made a bear seem fearful; but thy feet
This very night, when o'er thy heavy lids

Sleep draws the velvet solace of his plumes,
Shall tread it as thou goest to thy couch
To dream of him who loves thee." "Ah," said
she,
"Who goes away is ever free of care;
Who stays is heavy-hearted. Thou and I
Are one, my husband; when thou leavest me,
Though the blest sunshine trembles in my hair,
My heart becomes the darksome lair of fear.
I love thee, Idas." "And I love thee, too,"
Her husband answer'd. "I have thought of
thee
When, call'd in Greece's service, I have dared
The swift, unerring dart of bitter Death.
Thy love has kept me scathless, and thy voice
Has whisper'd me in hours of loneliness
Such words as gave me courage. I have lived
Since first I loved thee; and I love thee still,
And fain would live to win for thee and mine
Fresh honor and more glory. When I go
To fight for Greece, thou sayest not a word;
Yet now I go to bring thee——" Then he
laugh'd
And stroked the worry from her low, cool brow,
Then bade her note how eager were the hounds
To prove their mettle. And she clung to him
And look'd at him in silence. Ah! who knows
The thoughts behind a woman's trustful eyes,

Or senses all she suffers? Through the years
We take without a question all she gives,
But never know her. Infancy and age
Alike depend upon her; in his prime
Man strides alone to learn his destiny;
He crowns himself whenever he succeeds,
But turns to her for comfort when he fails.
So Idas laugh'd and kiss'd her. "Smile on me,"
He said at last, his weapons in his hand;
"That when I venture where the woods are dark
Thine eyes shall light me, and the memory
Of thy sweet face may hearten me against
What odds may wait me in the monster's cave."
And while the eager dogs leap'd noisily,
Or whined with noses pointed to the woods,
She kiss'd his forehead; and he strode away,
The dogs beside him watchful of his eye
And silent now as he was. And while yet
Marpessa's hands were clasp'd against her heart,
He pass'd within the menace of the woods.

And while her darlings slept, two pretty babes,
All pink and white and smiles and innocence,
To that same pool beyond the garden's walls
Marpessa went, unfearing. Now the woods
Were bright with promise, for the tallest trees
Beheld the first swift lances of the sun
Glint in the east, and drive in front of them

The last doom'd line of hesitating grey.
But still the grass, from which her sandals brush'd
Uncounted dewdrops mirroring the world,
Was cool in shadow, and the leaves were wet
As if the fleeing Night had wept o'er them.
And while she sped beneath the whisp'ring trees,
From glade to glade where now the startled hare
Look'd hurriedly upon her, and was gone,
She thought of Idas. Was it years ago
He woo'd and won her? Or but yestermorn
She said she loved him? For it seem'd her love
Was like the light, the golden light of day,
That grew each moment stronger; scarce she knew
How much she loved him. Ah! the gentle trees
That bent above the soil in sympathy
Would know her grief; and so she raised to them
Her pleading hands; and though they silent were,
She sensed their pity and was comforted.
But ere she came to where the shaded pool
Invited with its stillness, in her path
Stood one so splendid that the sun itself
Could make his face no brighter. Curling locks,
That gleam'd above a forehead marble-pale,
Caught the descending glory, but his eyes

Were dark with mystery, black yet terrible
As passion is, that hungers for the thing
Beyond the fever'd reaching of its hand.
But though his face was flame, the form of him
So perfect was, so chastely wonderful,
That, awed to silence and astonishment,
Marpessa eyed him as a moment's dream,
Half-fearing he might vanish. Then a smile
Caress'd his lips, a smile so luminous
That now an added glory dower'd him
And made him light itself—light radiant
In, of all human forms, the form most beautiful.
Now, seeing he had charm'd her, as the flame
Ensnares the soft-wing'd priestess of the dark,
He spoke. "Marpessa!" Just the name of her.
But, oh! his voice was as the voice of one
Who deems his love for evermore removed
Beyond the bridgeless gulfs of hopeless death,
Beyond all winning. As the echoes died
The silence seem'd suggestive of a woe,
So heavily it lay upon the soul
Of her that listen'd. And the hand of her,
While still she faced him with untroubled eyes,
Was slowly lifted to her drooping lips
As if in question. But, before she spoke,
Again Apollo cried that airy name,
Again it echo'd till the glade was fill'd.

"Marpessa!" Oh! the tenderness of it.
And then he held his hand outstretch'd to her
And look'd his longing; but as yet she thought
She dream'd by daylight, and the thing would
pass
As all dreams pass, however beautiful.
And still his beauty charm'd her, and, anon,
The air contain'd her hesitating hand
And heard her whisper: "Art thou Love itself,
Or Beauty's spirit? Or art thou a man,
And made of that same perishable stuff
That waits for death to ease it of its pain?
Or do I dream and think thou gleamest there,
While naught's around me save the list'ning
trees
And shifting sunlight? If a man thou art,
Whence comest thou? What hero-bearing land
May claim thy service, and what mother's eyes
Have joy'd above thy beauty?" Then in tones
That thrill'd at times the purest silences
Of highest heaven, Apollo answer'd her:
"Man am I not, nor subject unto death;
But number'd am with those whose gaze serene
Watches the world from heights of amethyst
Where sits my father. I am he that hymns
The song of morning, and, when even's torch
Reddens the west, I sing the requiem
That mourns the sun's down-going. I am he

To whom the Muses listen, and the stars
Echo the songs that tremble from my lips.
My mother was Latona." While he spoke,
A startled cry escaped Marpessa's lips
As, fearing now his presence, she essay'd
To ease her eyes in darkness with her hand.
And still was silent. "Now thou knowest me,"
The god continued, and his voice was soft
As that of waves on sands of drowsy isles.
"On sapphire morns of golden joyousness
Thy lips have sung my praises; thou hast seen
The curling incense widen in its rise
To circle me with fragrance. Drop thy hands
That I may see the beauty of thine eyes,
O fair Marpessa!" Then she look'd at him,
Unconscious of his purpose. "Brightest god,"
She whisper'd faintly as she lean'd to him;
"Thou callest me Marpessa. What am I
That thou, in accents sweeter than the wind
On eves of pearl, should'st call me by my name?
I am but mortal, and no more to thee
Than the doom'd flower that perishes with day."
And then he open'd wide his gleaming arms
And look'd at her, as he had often look'd
On other beauties willing to be won;
And once again the forest heard him sigh:
"Marpessa! fair Marpessa!" Then at last

She sensed his love, and straightway shrank from him
As from a thing unclean and dangerous.
But he continued with a swifter speech
To tell his passion. "Ah! thou knowest now
Why thus I cry 'Marpessa'! As I gazed
From heaven's bright heights and saw thee, in my heart
Love's sudden torch was lighted. Thee I love.
Unearthly splendors woo me when I pass
Those ways serene; the nymphs' white loveliness
Awaits me where the fern nods dreamily
Its acquiescence to the wooing wind.
But thou art fairer than the whitest nymph
That trembles in the moonlight. I have seen
Thy fated beauty, and I yearn for thee
As one in hell may hunger for the light."
But closer now she drew her purple robe
Across her breast. "Thou lovest hopelessly,
O flame-bright god," she said. "My love is his
Who won me from my father, who has spun
His golden dreams about me till to him
I seem as lovely as the brightest star.
Two babes remind us of our mating time,
Of days when yet we whisper'd each to each
The pretty nothings that to lovers are
More dear than all the wisdom of the years.
And now that we are cooler, side by side

We go our way, believing in the gods
And one another, fearless of the end."
But now Apollo near'd her. "Thee and thine
One end awaits, Marpessa. Night by night
The silent boatman bears to silent shores
The voiceless ghosts of lovers such as ye.
My loves become immortal. Time nor Change
Can touch those favor'd of the deathless gods.
If thou wilt love me thou shalt dwell with me
In everlasting splendor, and be praised
By men yet formless in the future's womb."
But now Marpessa laugh'd. "Where Idas goes,
My little ones must follow," she replied.
"Shall I forsake them in that bitter place,
And leave them lonely? Could a poet's song
Make shame less shameful? Oh! thou knowest not,
Bright god of morning, of the heart that is
A wife's and mother's. Could I stay with thee
And hear thee singing while mine own were crouch'd
In misty hell? And would thy kisses make
My sorrow for their desolation less?
Supreme art thou and very beautiful;
But though thy lips have quiver'd with the song
That thrills the holy cedars, in thy heart
Abides no love, nor aught of tenderness
If thus thou judgest women." And again

She laugh'd to think how Idas worship'd her,
And how she loved him. But, while yet she laugh'd,
Apollo seized her. "Thou art mine," he cried,
And press'd his burning lips upon her own.
"Thy constancy shall vanish as the dew
Forsakes its love, the pallid asphodel,
When sunbeams woo it. When I sing to thee
Thy pulse shall quicken; when my heart shall beat
Above thine own, thine eyes shall read in mine
Such dreams as force forgetfulness of all
Thy former dreamings. Thou shalt love me yet.
Thy hand shall yet caress me, and thy lips
Shall cling to mine until all space shall seem
Too tiny for our swooning." And while yet
The forest echo'd with her bitter cry,
And all grew dark around her, in his arms
Apollo bore his burden from the glade.

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HIS listless dogs behind him, through the woods
Strode Idas, singing. In a gloomy spot,
Where never satyr sprawl'd beneath the trees
Or teasing fauns dismay'd the restive deer,

The lip-raised bear had met him. Silently
They faced each other, and the waiting dogs
Whined to attack their ancient enemy.
Then from his bow the hunter shot a shaft
That whizz'd its song of death, and in the throat
Of it, the hunted, pitilessly lodged.
And while the brown brute lunged to challenge them,
The dogs sprang forward; but the bear was quick,
And smote with thick and danger-dealing paws
Its rash tormentors. One as suddenly
Yelp'd and was dead; and then a second shaft,
By Idas sped from his complaining bow,
Smote the huge fury in its shaggy breast.
And now it gave no heed to snapping jaws,
But, dripping blood from not ignoble wounds,
O'erlook'd the baser things and sought the man,
Its equal in the forest. With a roar
That cow'd the dogs, the bear, uprear'd and straight,
Confronted Idas. But the spear was poised,
The spear long envied of the Argonauts,
And, loosed, it travell'd like a thunderbolt
And smote the bear and drove him back again.
Then through the vast and bloody cavity
Pale Death rush'd in and chill'd its mighty heart,

And closed its angry eyes against the woods.
And ere the hearten'd dogs could worry it
The noble beast crash'd down, and was as still
As is the fell'd tree, slaughter'd in its prime.

But when he reach'd his palace, and had cast
His shoulder's burden on the gleaming stairs,
Marpessa did not greet him. Through the halls
He strode and call'd her, but his children's cries
Apprised him she was absent. Then of them
That eyed him mutely, faithful servitors
Still proud to serve, he ask'd in curtest speech
If one had seen her. But they still were dumb
And shook their heads while looking on the ground.
And though they search'd the palace, cried her name
And sought the gardens over, not a sign
Of lost Marpessa brought the seekers joy.
But when, at fault, they turn'd to pray the gods
Reveal their secret; and with troubled eyes
Their master follow'd them, a blind old hound
Much favor'd of Marpessa bay'd the woods;
And ever sniffing as she cross'd the grass
Went slowly forward, baying as she went.
Then Idas knew; and shouting to the slaves
To guard his children as they would their lives,

He grasp'd his spear and follow'd. Yard by yard
The hound went on, while Idas spoke to her,
Impatient, yet all-grateful for her aid.
And on and on, beneath the self-same pines
That saw on other days such happenings
As he might find delight in; through such glades
Where Dian heard her moon-enamor'd maids
Relate the day's adventures; how the deer
Escaped their arrows, or a drowsy herd
Gazed at their limbs with unbelieving eyes
And fell asleep again. But Idas' thoughts
Were fix'd on his Marpessa, and his gaze
Was strain'd upon the distance. Bush and tree
Seem'd fraught with menace to the one he loved,
And therefore hateful; so he hurried on
Behind the hound, and cheer'd her with his voice.
And once she whined, and turn'd, then turn'd again
And bay'd the louder; for her scent was keen
Although her eyes were useless. Overhead
The sun had cross'd the midline of the sky,
And slanting beams now fill'd the drowsy woods
With afternoon's still glory; bush and tree
Alike seem'd golden, and a golden sheen
Fell on the upturn'd faces of the flowers.
But little now reck'd Idas of the hour,

And little of its beauty. Ah! what sight
Might blind his eyes when once the baying ceased
That now seem'd Hope's own music? Had the pool
Forever closed above her? Or would she,
With lilies far less white and delicate,
Stare from its edge with fix'd, unseeing eyes
Upon the blue above them? Then he thought
Of how the bear had almost conquer'd him,
And saw her bruised and mangled in the fern.
But on and on the blind hound, baying, went
With Idas close behind her. Nearing now
The shadow'd pool, his heart grew heavier;
But while he steel'd himself to learn the fate
Of all he loved and cherish'd, once again
The hound stood still and sniff'd uneasily
The air about her. Then she whined and slunk
To where her master waited, glooming now,
His eyes so useless. Then again she sniff'd
The air itself, unmindful of the grass,
And seem'd at fault; but ever from the pool
Would turn her head. And Idas petted her;
But though she knew his meaning, on the grass
She lay and whined with fine, uplifted head,
And would not move. Then Idas left her there
To seek behind the bushes, finding naught,

And so came back, and watch'd her. Now he
knew
That she was borne from that well-trodden path
That cleft the forest to the shelter'd pool
By some grim enemy, or beast or man;
And while his hands were eager to bequeath
Red death on aught that held her, in his heart
Her face alone was imaged, only hers.
But while he wonder'd at the hound's distress,
And bade her seek and find again the scent,
There came a first, faint puff of perfumed wind
From off the mountains, and the hound leap'd
up
Alert and silent; then she sniff'd again
And ever grew more eager. And at last,
When sure she seem'd of something, something
hid
From Idas' understanding, through the woods
Her full-mouth'd baying boom'd. Then on
again,
With head erect as if her eyes could see,
The faithful brute proceeded; ever on
Now whining and now baying. And behind
Strode eager Idas, firm-lipp'd, resolute,
And hard his hand embraced his trusted spear.

The sun was setting ere he came on them.
While yet afar Marpessa heard the hound,

And cried to Idas, knowing he was near.
And he had leap'd to clasp her, calling her
In tones that voiced his anguish, asking not
Why thus he found her with the god of song;
But scorning him and hating. But the god
Still kept them parted, and had taunted him
With mocking words, the while confronting him.
"Fly hence while yet thou may'st," he cried to
him.
"Thy wife is mine. Death holds his shroud
o'er thee;
But she has turn'd her glances to the heights
Where I abide in splendor. Mine she is;
And me she loves for my immortal song
And all that makes me god-like." Hearing him
It seem'd to Idas that the gods had rock'd
The petty world, and that along with it
He totter'd to destruction. In his ears,
As booming seas may thunder in a cave,
A roaring menace sounded, and he clutch'd
The air about him wildly, giddily,
And could not speak; could only clutch the air,
And stare at her whose name he could not say
Despite his heart's deep longing. But the voice
Of pale Marpessa cried across the dusk:
"I love thee, Idas! In its constancy
My heart so steep'd is that it laughs at death.
The wolf will better rear our little ones

Than this bright Splendor who has threaten'd
us;
And, rather than be his, and dwell in light,
I'd feel once more thy lips upon mine eyes,
Hear once thy voice assure me of thy love,
And, with thine arm about me, seek the mists."
And though he could not answer her as yet,
He look'd his yearning, stunn'd and impotent
To cry his grief, but longing to unite
His iron hands around the marble throat
Of him who ever eyed him with disdain.
And still Apollo mock'd him: "She shall sit
With me in glory, and shall lean to me
When thou art long forgotten. At her feet
I heap my gifts of immortality
And love eternal. Go, while I am kind;
Thy wife my love is. If I stare at thee
Thy days are ended." And again she cried,
As one who sees her loved one perishing:
"I love thee, Idas, who art all to me;"
And fain had touch'd him with her trembling
hand,
But could not. And while yet she gazed at
him
With love and anguish in the eyes so dear,
He found his speech and thunder'd: "God thou
art,
But foul seducer also. In the woods

Are they that hate thee—Isse, Chione,
And Zephyrus, whom Hyacinthus scorn'd.
Despite thy splendor, and thy gift of song,
Loathsome thou art to things of purity,
Defiler and vain boaster. In the skies
Thy station is, to serve the Thunderer,
Lest, anger'd, he chastise thee. Sweet thy hymns
In ears that still are strangers to the songs
Of earth's dear birds. The while thou gleamest there
Thou art a menace, and the foe of all
That makes our short-year'd life seem bearable.
I hate thee, and would rid the woods of thee.
Now aid thou me, great Zeus, a simple man,
Yet righteous in my anger and my love.
Guide thou my spear, and tip its point with death
That I may slay this robber, win mine own,
And bless thee for thy succour." Swiftly then
He hurl'd the dart, but slipp'd and saw it pierce
An oak behind Apollo. And the god,
Now bright with anger, tore the quiv'ring shaft
From out the tree and posed to hurtle it
Against defenceless Idas. Even now
The mists were heavy in Marpessa's eyes,
And she was praying for the man she loved,

When lo! the shades were scatter'd. In their midst
Stood one of grave, majestic countenance,
As golden as Apollo, but serene
And conscious of his power. Then to the earth
The spear was lower'd, and Marpessa's hand
Was raised in supplication. But the eyes
Of him that stood there were the eyes of one
Who awed all men to silence, and her words
Remain'd unutter'd in her anguish'd breast.
Then, turning first to where Apollo gleam'd,
He eyed him gravely. "Is dissension sweet,"
He ask'd, and pointed to the lower'd spear,
"That thus ye fight when from the western skies
My glory is departing? From the soil
Sweet incense rises, and the trees are still'd
In solemn adoration. Even now
The stars prepare to smile upon the world,
And all is hush'd. The spear is in thy hand;
Thy brow is anger'd. I await thy words."
And then Apollo storm'd. "The maid is mine,
I love her. She would share——" But Idas now
Strode hotly forward. "O great Zeus," he cried,
"The bright god lies! This woman is my wife,
My loved Marpessa. We are wed, are one.
Thy praise we sing together, and our babes

Await her in their cradle. She is mine."
And then the wroth Apollo frown'd at him:
"If I but speak thou fallest at my feet,
And hell shall open to receive thy ghost.
Who, then, art thou to look me in the eyes
And say: 'Thou liest'? I can harass thee
And make thy days a torment. Thou shalt learn
My awful vengeance; thou shalt cry to me
As Jason cried when hurried to his death."
But Idas answer'd: "Nay, I fear thee not.
A man I am and I can die but once.
Death has for me no terrors. Could I hold
Thy gleaming hair, I'd stand erect in hell
And deem my life well ended but to shout:
'Behold Apollo, who would harm my wife!'"
And then again Apollo raised his spear,
But Zeus commanded and again it dropp'd.
And then he turn'd to where Marpessa stood,
All pale and trembling. "It shall rest with thee
To choose thy lover," said the grave-eyed god.
"But ponder well before thou utterest
Thy heart's desire. Beneath these gentle trees
A hero claims thee, and a gleaming god.
To each thou art a treasure, but to one
Thyself thou givest. It shall rest with thee
To choose thy destiny—to dwell on high

Or on the earth that is a part of thee.
Who loves Apollo must be sometimes sad.
The song that trembles on his crimson lips
Is heard by many and of many loved.
The woods are his, the mountains. Where he goes
All hearts adore him, but he passes on
To other conquests and to other loves.
Apollo says he loves thee. If with him
Thou goest hence, thou shalt immortal be;
Shalt watch the birth of worlds, the vanishing
Of all that now is bright and wonderful.
Beside me thou shalt sit when life is done.
The stars shall be thy children, and the winds
Shall sing thy praises ere the dusk descends.
And if thy choice be Idas, thou shalt know
The even bliss of mortals and their griefs.
The dawn shall wake thee, and the night shall bring
Thy head unto its pillow where lies his
Who shares with thee thy sorrow and thy joy.
Thy babes will love thee, but shall some day go
Beyond the silent longing of thine eyes,
Beyond thy hand's caresses. Even he,
Whose hair turns whiter while thou kissest it,
Must go at last; and thou must follow him,
And bid farewell to light and all that made
Thy little day seem perfect. Being gone

Thou soon shalt be forgotten. Few are they
Whose names are number'd with the names of stars;
Thy little pleasure must be had to-day.
For man is dust. His dreams are of the sky;
But all the toys that bring him happiness
Lie strewn between his cradle and his grave."
And while he spoke, Marpessa forward lean'd
As if to choose; but with commanding eyes
The grave god held her while he spoke again.
"Apollo's hand would raise thee to the heights;
But Sorrow's face in airy solitudes
Is not unknown, for she is everywhere
Where hearts may beat. She, too, will follow thee
If thou with Idas goest. At her knees
Ye both must kneel when that dark hour comes
That comes alike to those whom Love makes one
And those whom Love ne'er blesses. Choose thou now."
And while Apollo eyed her haughtily,
Too sure of conquest, Idas lean'd to her
With outstretch'd arms, still hungry for her love
And fearful she might leave him. But his doubt
Was vain and idle, as a man's doubt is—
Who learns what love is only when 't is lost;
For, laughing now, Marpessa ran to him,

Heedless of bright Apollo or of Zeus,
And with her arms close-twined about his neck
Cried: "Idas! O my Idas!" Thus they gazed
In eyes where tears were welling; thus they stood
To all oblivious save their happy selves,
And said no word, but gazed, and gazed again.
And when at last they turn'd, it was to find
The gods had vanish'd and themselves alone.
Alone they stood amid the leafy peace,
Beneath the skies where now gleam'd wondrously
The blessèd star of even; in their hearts
The love that cares not what the future holds,
Nor ever dreams of death; and at their feet
The blind old hound, awaiting their caress.